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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by local persons responsible for planning, managing, and evaluating Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs, this guide draws on the experiences that Private Industry Councils, Service Delivery Areas (SDAs), and local program operators have had providing tryout employment. (Tryout employment programs provide entry-level work experiences to young people who would not usually be hired because they lack good work behaviors, attitudes, or skills or because they face other barriers to employment.) The guide describes alternative approaches and techniques used in current tryout programs. The first section of the guide defines tryout employment experience and explains why it is important. The second section provides a systematic approach to use in designing tryout employment programs. The third section uses that approach to describe locally developed programs or program functions such as assessment. This section also contains some examples of key forms developed by SDAs or operators for use with employers and participants in clarifying responsibilities and tracking performance. A list of National Alliance of Business regional service offices concludes the document. (CML)

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Learn and Earn Through Tryout Employment

A comprehensive guide for JTPA practitioners

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LEARN AND EARN
THROUGH TRYOUT EMPLOYMENT

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR JTPA PRACTITIONERS

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS
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Learn and Earn Through Tryout Employment grew out of a recognition that the Exemplary Employment Program for Youth in the Job Training Partnership Act contains an exciting opportunity to devise creative local approaches to serving both in-school and out-of-school youth.

The four broadly described program elements suggest a series of employment development programs which correspond to the changing needs of youth as they mature. In particular, the Tryout Employment program holds new and significant potential to serve youth effectively because it directly links an educational activity with paid work experience in the private sector. Program operations now have the tools to draft program designs both to transition students to the world-of-work and to assist dropouts to enrich themselves academically while they earn needed income and gain critical work experience.

Learn and Earn Through Tryout Employment is oriented to PIC and SDA policy makers and program operators, alike. Additionally, vocational education personnel will be interested in this publication because of tryout employment's ability to compliment cooperative education programs. State JTPA officials will also gain important insight into policy considerations which impact on local program design.

The National Alliance of Business is pleased to present this important new guide. We wish to thank Ms. Gerri Fiala, the principal author, for her outstanding work, enduring patience and great enthusiasm throughout the project.

In addition, NAB deeply appreciates the advice and counsel of the many programs cited throughout the guide. Their inspiration and leadership has helped to make **Learn and Earn Through Tryout Employment** truly a practitioner-oriented publication. The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration must also be recognized because of their invaluable comments throughout this project. Thanks also are extended to G. Nadine Flood and Carol Anne Boileau for their patience and long nights spent on its production. And finally, recognition must go out to Steven Pines, Manager of Youth Programs at NAB, who first conceived of this project, shaped its overall design and helped make it available to you.

Table of Contents

	Section	Page
I.	Introduction to Tryout Employment	1
II.	A Framework for Tryout Employment Design	8
III.	Tryout Employment Approaches and Techniques	24
IV.	List of NAB Regional Service Offices	40

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO TRYOUT EMPLOYMENT

Many young people are plagued by inadequate preparation for work and joblessness. Youth who are poor, minority, or high school dropouts are at greatest risk; they face a 40 to 50 percent chance of being unemployed. Although millions of new jobs have been added to the economy during the past few years and employers report a shortage of qualified entry level workers, the number of jobs going to poor and minority youth has decreased. Employers complain that youth seeking employment lack good work behaviors and attitudes or basic skills. This complaint is supported by the fact that nearly one-fifth of this nation's youth leave school without the basic skills needed to compete in the work force.

The employment problems of youth are not likely to diminish. The proportion of youth and minority youth who are poor continues to grow even though the teenage population is shrinking about 10 percent each year. More than three million unemployed individuals under age 25 are actively looking for work. Another two million individuals in this age group have dropped out of the labor force, discouraged at not finding work.

How can we provide effective services to these young people? How can we better use existing resources to address the mix of educational, employment, and related personal, social, or family problems troubling many poor and minority youth? Based on lessons learned through credible demonstration and research projects, the Job Training Partnership Act sets forth exemplary youth programs which localities can implement to improve services to these and other at-risk youth.

The program suggest a progression of developmental services for youth activities. Section 205 of JTPA presents the specifications for four exemplary programs:

- **pre-employment skill development** particularly for younger, in-school youth
- **education for employment** for low academic achievers, including school dropouts
- **entry employment experience** programs for in-school-youth as well as youth who re-enter educational programs
- **school-to-work transition** assistance for high school seniors and recent school dropouts

This guide, **Learn and Earn Through Tryout Employment**, focuses on one exciting component of entry employment experience: **Tryout Employment**. Tryout employment is aimed at young people who would not normally be hired because they lack good work behaviors, attitudes, or skills or face other barriers to employment. These programs provide worksite skill training and education to help youth get and keep unsubsidized jobs. The mix of work and education can provide positive learning experiences for youth. Tryout employment can also the foster coalitions of employers, educational institutions, and other community-based, youth-serving organizations which are necessary if young people are to acquire the skills required by local employers. Says one rural service delivery area executive director, "Tryout is a program that lends itself to strong local community support. Our local school systems and regional educational agencies view the program as an important link with the private sector."

An urban private industry council director also expresses support for tryout programs:

> "The Private Industry Council likes this [tryout] program because it is geared to private employers...It is an extremely low cost program which helps us meet the cost per positive termination standard.... It allows more costly training for out-of-school youth who are usually older and in need of intensive services."

Given such expressions of interest and support, the results of a survey on exemplary youth programs are not surprising (National Association of Private Industry Councils', April, 1985). Over four-fifths of responding PICs and SDAs implementing any exemplary youth program operate an entry employment experience component. Ninety percent of those operating entry employment experience components have tryout employment programs in place.

This guide is intended for use by local individuals responsible for the planning, management, and evaluation of youth programs. It draws on the experiences that PICs, SDAs, and local program operators have had with tryout employment, and describes alternative approaches and techniques used in current Tryout programs. These approaches and techniques can be tailored to meet unique local situations. In this way, the National Alliance of Business hopes to encourage the expansion or enhancement of tryout employment programs across the nation.

What is tryout employment experience?

Tryout employment experience provides young people with the opportunity to acquire job-specific knowledge or skills at private sector worksites or, if these are unavailable, at public or private nonprofit worksites. For those young people who satisfactorily acquire and demonstrate job skills and appropriate work behaviors and attitudes, tryout employment experience is expected to result in unsubsidized employment.

Tryout employment is one of three entry employment experience components. The other two components are employment opportunities which provide community improvement services and cooperative education. Each of these components includes a mix of education and work opportunities. Each is targeted for economically disadvantaged youth (ages 16 through 21) who:

- Have completed a pre-employment skills training program or its equivalent;
- Have not recently held a regular part-time or summer job for more than 250 hours; and
- Are enrolled in a secondary school or an organization offering certified high school equivalency programs, and are meeting minimum acceptable attendance and academic requirements or have met such requirements during the most recent term. (JTPA Secton 204(d)(1))

Young people who do not plan to continue in post-secondary education or training programs are given priority.

Many individuals are concerned aboout JTPA's capacity to serve school dropouts. School dropouts who agree to participate in an academic program at an educational institution or other certified organization can enter basic or remedial education programs, which will help them progress toward the acquisition of a high school diploma or its equivalent, and work and learn in a tryout position. Thus by linking jobs with education JTPA creates potent incentives for dropouts who may otherwise avoid academic training.

Similar to other entry employment experiences, tryout employment can be provided for up to 20 hours per week during the school year, or full time during summer vacations or school holidays (JTPA Section 205 (d)(2)). A youth can participate up to 500 hours in entry employment experience, including tryout. No single tryout position assignment may be longer than 250 hours.

Each tryout employment program is to be appropriately supervised according to local definition. Standards of performance, including attendance, are to be maintained and tracked. Because this minimally involves both school and work attendance for each participant, program operators should be aware that others have experienced time lags in education performance reporting. Thus, planned information flow and staff development activities should emphasize not only what is to be reported and how, but the importance of timely reporting.

Because the anticipated outcome is unsubsidized employment, young people who successfully complete the program and meet performance standards can expect to be hired in the positions for which they have trained. This expectation is intended to place some responsibility on private sector employers to ensure that tryout positions are viable opportunities for permanent employment. If local program operators carefully match each individual youth's interests, skills, and aptitudes to the requirements and expectations of individual employers and provide appropriate follow-up or support service, few situations should result in no-hires or transfers.

In some cases, employers may not hire trainees who successfullly complete the program. Such employers cannot reuse the tryout positions in which these successful trainees worked. This sanction applies only to the tryout position, not the entire employer or worksite. Of course, if the employer is adversely affected by circumstances beyond his or her control, the local area needs to make such a determination and document it. In other words, the local area assumes responsibility for ensuring that tryout employment experiences are not abused.

Private Industry Councils (PICs) which choose to implement Tryout Employment programs have the flexibility to design programs within the parameters described in JTPA Secton 205. However, tension exists between the flexibility to accommodate local needs and conditions and the implementing federal regulations (630.1(c))

which seemingly exclude tryout employment from such flexibility. PICs do have significant opportunities to respond to local situations which may require design changes in order to implement successful exemplary youth programs. PICs can propose and approve changes to other exemplary youth programs contained in local job training plans within relevant state and federal rules. According to existing federal rules, however, tryout employment programs must operate within the parameters described earlier in this section.

Why is tryout employment experience important?

Tryout employment encourages employers to train and eventually hire young people who, because of their lack of experience, skills, or other problems, would not usually be hired. We know from past experience that the private sector can be a strong partner in the training of young people, but that employers are very cost-conscious about hiring youth. Tryout employment provides a structured, low-cost, low-risk method for employers to teach qualified young people requisite job skills and other performance expectations. It also provides an opportunity for young people to earn income while demonstrating what they can do.

Because tryout employment mixes work and education, tryout employment may likely provide local operators with an improved means for addressing the longer-term developmental needs of at-risk youth. A service sequence which prescribes pre-employment skills development, basic skills, and job specific skills and which reinforces proper work behaviors and attitudes in both classroom and worksite settings, can become one of a local area's "best shots" at helping at-risk youth.

Success in programs which target school dropouts is the most difficult to achieve because these young people frequently lack the patience, motivation, or perception of "payoff" from commitment to longer-term training. A dropout's future prospects for labor market success are enhanced by tryout employment, which can

use special education curricula designed to meet the needs of out-of-school youth, provide satisfactory income, and offer adequate support services. Based on the supposition that the longer a young person stays in a program, the greater the likelihood of achieving success, youth need to be encouraged to maintain their program participation. Local operators need to review their experience and determine what techniques or structures are likely to encourage retention in light of established performance standards. Several suggestions from other tryout program staff are described later in this guide.

How is the guide organized?

The remainder of this guide is organized into two sections. Section II provides a systematic approach to use in designing tryout employment programs. Section III uses this approach to describe locally developed techniques or examples of tryout employment programs or program functions, e.g., assessment. It also contains some examples of key formats developed by local SDAs or operators for use with employers and participants in clarifying responsibilities and tracking performance.

This guide is based on the National Alliance of Business' experience with youth programming and observations from locally volunteered tryout employment submissions. Thus, users should be aware that the techniques or examples are illustrative, rather than exemplary, and comprise practical suggestions, rather than evaluative findings. Local job training program officials have used the techniques contained within this guide and consider them sound and useful for their counterparts across the nation.

SECTION II: A FRAMEWORK FOR TRYOUT EMPLOYMENT DESIGN

In order for tryout employment programs to result in unsubsidized jobs, consideration must be given to the concerns of employers, participants, and administrators. These concerns are taken into account in the design framework presented in Exhibit 1. The design framework can help local decision makers:

- Apply a systematic approach to the design and development of tryout employment programs.
- List the basic requirements of a tryout program.
- Delineate the key design features that will affect any tryout program.
- Identify the appropriate points and effective techniques for involving employers, educational agencies, youth serving organizations, and others in local tryout programs.
- Describe appropriate methods for monitoring and evaluating tryout program performance.

It is intended to help PICs and SDA administrators plan and manage job training programs. The framework was developed by the National Alliance of Business as part of it's training course entitled, **"Developing Quality Training."**

The Design Framework

The design of any tryout employment program involves six basic steps:

1. Assess the needs of employers and participants.
2. Analyze data and make decisions.

3. Design the tryout employment program.

4. Implement the training program.

5. Monitor the training.

6. Evaluate the training.

The framework displayed in Exhibit 1 depicts these six steps along three consideration "tracks." The employer track focuses on areas in which employers need to be involved. The participant track concentrates on operational concerns that need to be addressed to better serve youth. The administrative track centers on purely administrative concerns of the PIC and the SDA. These three tracks merge into one as the tryout employment program is implemented.

The PIC or SDA may choose to play a variety of roles in completing the steps and activities in both the employer and participant tracks, or they may choose to delegate certain roles and responsibilities to service providers (e.g., educational agencies, community or youth-serving organizations). However, the PIC or SDA staff cannot delegate responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating tryout employment program performance.

EXHIBIT 1: TRYOUT EMPLOYMENT DESIGN FRAMEWORK

STEP	EMPLOYER	PARTICIPANT	ADMINISTRATIVE
1. Assess Needs	• Establish criteria for selecting occupations as training targets and industry/employer marketing targets. • Review labor market data. • Identify growth industries and growth occupations. • Confirm employer needs (industry and occupation). • Select occupations for training and industries/employers for marketing research/targets.	• Review printed labor force data from a variety of sources. • Identify characteristics of current JTPA-eligible youth population. • Establish and describe service priority groups for tryout.	• Develop work plan, including responsibilities (under financial and nonfinancial agreements) for PIC, administrative entity, and cooperating agencies. • Prepare a statement of work for tryout for each prospective contractor.
2. Analyze Data and Make Decisions	• Secure employer commitment to participate. • Review known information on occupations/industries/employers. • Conduct employer onsite visits to identify specific occupational and other entry-level hiring requirements.	• Review occupational profiles in light of service priority groups. • Determine duration of training. • Determine preemployment skills level required. • Determine reading and math levels necessary for most basic and most advanced jobs/tasks.	• Develop evaluation criteria for contractor. • Determine whether selection process will be formal (Request for Proposal) or informal.

STEP	EMPLOYER	PARTICIPANT	ADMINISTRATIVE
2. Analyze Data and Make Decision (cont'd)	• Analyze data and prioritize occupational skills to be learned (may include work behaviors and attitudes or other hiring requirements. • Prepare occupational profiles.	• Determine aptitudes necessary for success, which cannot be taught, e.g., fine motor skills for word processing.	• Prepare elements of RFP package.
3. Design Tryout Program	• Establish tryout program goals and objective. • Establish participant performance objectives, i.e., what do youth need to do, when or where, and how well. • Write curriculum. • Define necessary activities to implement, manage, and document. • Review and refine curriculum/training plan with employers.	• Determine recruitments strategy. • Develop assessment tools and procedures. • Select participants.	• Select contractor(s) using evaluation criteria against submission. • Negotiate and finalize statement of work.

STEP	THREE TRACKS MERGE INTO SINGLE TRACK
4. Implement the Training Program	• Follow schedule in statement of work. • Continue to involve employers in training: – Sharing facilities/equipment – Sponsoring tryout positions – Helping market program – Providing guest lectures – Proving on-the-job opportunities following training as appropriate – Providing job sample materials for use in assessment or education – Participating in mock interviews – Securing financial contributions for training, materials, supplies, or participant awards – Attending program graduations • Make sure to: – Establish clear requirements and deadlines for documentation and reports. – Clarify responsibilities of PIC, SDA administrative entity, contractor, employer, and participant in writing. – Provide technical assistance as needed.
5. Monitor the Training	• Assign monitoring review responsibilities (Who will monitor? Who will supervise? What tasks will be performed when?). • Decide what and how to monitor. • Identify data needs and sources (e.g., MIS records, employer records, education records, participant Employability Development Plans, on-site observations, etc.). • Develop monitoring plan and schedule. • Ensure tryout monitoring plan integration with other monitoring and program functions such as MIS report production.
6. Evaluate the Training	• Develop evaluation plan — assigning responsibilities; determining data needs, sources and collection methods; developing analysis plan; preparing any tools needed (e.g., interview guides); and; scheduling tasks. • Review evaluation design with appropriate PIC oversight or evaluation committee and finalize for implementation.

Design Factors

Local PICs must determine certain policies and certain conditions in preparing to implement Tryout Employment programs. These policies and conditions will affect the final design of any local tryout program.

What are the rules and regulations affecting tryout employment?

Local decision makers should be aware of any state rules related to tryout employment as well as JTPA and federal regulations. Many states have simply repeated JTPA and federal regulations regarding tryout in state publications. Some states have provided additional guidance through policy issuances or technical assistance bulletins. Some states, which have just resolved other JTPA systems level management issues, are now beginning to address the area of exemplary youth program design, including tryout employment.

Some guidance commonly provided by states specifies:

- Emphasizing permanent employment as the principal outcome for tryout programs; attainment of youth competencies as an acceptable, but secondary, outcome.
- Targeting youth who are in high school or who have dropped out and are willing to return to an educational program and work toward a high school degree or the equivalent.
- Relying on the PIC to define key terms such as "recently" and "regular" in the selection criterion: "Have not recently held a regular part-time or summer job for more than 250 hours." (Sec. 205 (d) (1))
- Maintaining similar worker protection and restrictions for tryout employment and On-the-Job Training (OJT).

Variations in state guidance are more likely in procedural matters such as documentation, reporting, and "worker benefits." For example, to institutionalize tryout employment in **Georgia**, tryout programs are categorized and reported as a regular program with other Section 204 programs; all other exemplary youth programs and youth competency-based programs are categorized as "special" programs. Tryout participants in **California** are expected to secure permanent employment upon successful completion; however, completion of tryout may also lead to OJT opportunities. If a tryout participant moves into OJT, a second tryout participant cannot be placed in the original tryout position until the OJT participant moves into unsubsidized employment. Although a number of states are silent regarding the designation of employer, **Wisconsin** has ruled that for purposes of unemployment insurance compensation, the employer is the worksite. This means that the worksite pays for unemployment insurance compensation. Wisconsin SDAs can reimburse employers for this cost, but few employers make claims because of the paperwork involved. In **Montana**, private employers are required to provide participants with worker's compensation benefits.

In summary, find out your state's rules regarding tryout employment. Any adaptations of alternative approaches or techniques suggested in this or other documents should be reviewed in light of your state's rules.

Who will be served in tryout employment?

Is tryout to apply to all in-school youth? To graduating seniors only? To older school dropouts? To youth served in short-term summer activities? Within broad guidelines, the focus is on economically disadvantaged youth, ages 16 through 21, who are in or out of school, who are willing to participate in an education and work program. The targeting decision drives the design of tryout employment programs.

Current variations in tryout program design reflect, in part, the choice of target population and, in part, outcome expectations.

What outcomes are expected from tryout employment?

Outcomes usually relate to the type of youth targeted for service. For example, older, out-of-school youth are traditionally the recipients of occupational skill training, remedial education, and OJT. These more intensive services are generally provided to youth likely to have a clearer occupational focus because they are costly and require a longer-term commitment than less intensive services such as career exploration or work experience. If permanent, full-time employment is the expected outcome, tryout programs may be most appropriate for youth who have made occupational choices, e.g., graduating seniors, or older, out-of-school youth. If permanent, part-time employment is also acceptable, youth ages 16 and 17 who are still in school may participate in the program as well.

Attainment of youth employment competencies as defined by the PIC is also a tryout employment program outcome. Documentation of each youth's participation in a pre-employment skills training program is a pre-condition for participation in tryout. However, some tryout programs provide opportunities for participants to acquire pre-employment skills during the program in addition to work maturity, basic education, or job-specific skills. Many tryout programs which provide competency-based training report competency attainment as a formal outcome only if the participant does not move into unsubsidized employment but does acquire a competency. (Readers interested in a detailed discussion of competencies should read DOL-NAB's recently published A Systems Approach to Youth Employment Competencies.)

What is a satisfactory service mix for tryout employment?

Tryout employment calls for a blend of work and education. This is important for two reasons. First, we know from experience that learning opportunities which combine work and school are a positive experience for youth, especially in-school youth. Second, we also know that disadvantaged youth generally want to and, if given the opportunity, are willing to do so in entry level, minimum wage jobs. Although these statements are based upon empirical research, recent tryout experience reinforces the need to combine work and education. According to one executive director, "We are convinced that by linking both a job training and a formal education program, the participants will benefit far more than strictly work experience alone."

Unfortunately, there is no magic answer which provides the exact balance between work, education, and other support services. The local answer depends on who are to be served, what their needs are, and what services are available or can be developed to meet their needs. We know that if special education programs are available to meet the needs of school dropouts, these youth may agree to participate in the program as long as income opportunities and support services are provided. Thus, if school dropouts are targeted as a priority group for service, the tryout program mix should include work, a special education program, support services and intensive counseling.

Is tryout employment part of a larger, more comprehensive strategy for serving youth?

By its very inclusion in a range of exemplary youth programs, tryout employment is acknowledged as a component of a more comprehensive service strategy for youth. The age range of eligible youth (i.e., 16 through 21 years old) means that participants are at different maturation levels and thus have different needs. If you

think of youth services as a continuum from less intensive to more intensive, the expected outcomes and services for younger, in-school youth fall at the lower end; older, out-of-school youth are at the upper end. For example, younger, in-school youth are encouraged to stay in school and meet academic and attendance requirements. They may also be expected to acquire career/labor market information and career decision making and planning skills. At the other end of the continuum are older, out-of-school youth with critical income and support needs, who are expected to be self-sufficient. These older youth may require specific occupational skills training and related education services in addition to a redressing of any basic or work maturity skill deficits.

Many PICs select a range of services, based on the characteristics and needs of JTPA-eligible youth. Although the probability is low that PICs now use tryout deliberately as part of a formal developmental strategy for serving youth , there are examples in which tryout plays a key role in a larger service strategy. For example, **Vermont's** tryout employment program is designed to provide a trial period of employment leading to permanent employment. Tryout participants are expected to have mastered pre-employment competencies earlier in the program; they then move into either tryout, OJT, or limited work experience. Attainment of work maturity competencies is accomplished through formal classes, small groups, or individual instruction, and occupation-specific skill competencies are attained at the worksite. In **North Carolina**, participants successfully complete tryout programs by receiving both a satisfactory rating from worksite supervisors for work performance and from instructional staff. Instructional staff rate individual participant performance in three competency: areas job search or labor market skills; work behaviors and attitudes; and learning performance (e.g., taking initiative, seeking opportunities

to learn, accepting constructive criticism, and requiring progressively less supervision.)

Some PICs also oversee the operation of tryout programs as a component of JTPA Title II-B summer programs. Designs range from using the summer program as the "work" portion of tryout for in-school youth leading to full-or part-time permanent jobs, to experiments in providing concentrated work, education, counseling, and support services for school dropouts.

The most common service sequence appears to be the flow of youth from pre-employment and work-maturity-related instruction to educational programs or worksites. While this flow is suggested in the legislative description of employment experience, it does not preclude participating in more than one activity at time, e.g., pre-employment and basic education. Because most tryout programs are expected to result in permanent placements, tryout is clearly a planned exit point from the job training system. However, a few SDAs link tryout program completion to apprenticeship, OJT, or other advanced skills training for selected participants. If the overall job training service delivery system is designed to ensure the incremental development of skills, tryout employment will probably be used as part of a comprehensive service strategy for youth.

How are participants compensated in tryout employment?

Compensation in lieu of wages is paid to tryout participants (JTPA Section 205 (d)(3)(B).) This phrase allows compensation costs to be charged entirely to the training cost category for fiscal accountability. It also ensures that JTPA grant recipients, not employers, are directly or indirectly responsible for payments to participants. Approaches for providing compensation and related worker benefits vary across states and local areas.

The NAPIC survey cited earlier indicates that nearly all PICs or SDAs operating tryout programs provide compensation in lieu of wages for participants. The average rate of compensation was $3.19 per hour and compensation ranged from $1.95 to $3.51 per hour. One explanation of the average compensation rate level is that SDAs pay participants at the minimum wage level or at a lower level which reflects the minimum wage level minus estimated withholdings (i.e., actual take-home pay).

Many states relate compensation in lieu of wages to the discussion of comparable compensation rates in Section 142 of the Act. Because tryout participants are filling actual employment positions, these states direct that participants should be compensated at the same prevailing level as other employees performing the same duties. Most states are silent on whether compensation is a stipend or allowance to be paid weekly or daily. Rarely is compensation discussed in non-monetary terms. One state which indicates that compensation can be either monetary or non-monetary, specifies that compensation "(a) cannot be goods or services to which the participant is otherwise entitled; and (b) must be equivalent to the applicable minimum wage."

Many states and localities report confusion about whether tryout participant compensation is subject to federal withholding. In Greensboro, North Carolina, a regional office of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) said that tryout employment payments are considered compensation for services rendered and, therefore, subject to tax. Federal, state, and FICA are all withheld in North Carolina where this opinion was given. In general, payments are considered income subject to taxation if: 1) the participant performs services or, 2) payments to participants are <u>not</u> made for welfare purposes and measured according to the personal or family needs of the participant. These payments for service are considered income even though the participant receives some degree of training (Rev. Rule 75-246). Without a

definitive IRS ruling, some states require withholding, and many SDAs in other states have moved to withhold taxes.

How can community resources be mobilized for tryout employment?

Many youth who can benefit from tryout employment programs have multiple needs. To adequately address these needs, a number of SDAs actively seek to coordinate job training and other related area resources. Coordination of any resources requires a context, and the context here is the combination of activities and services which enable youth to acquire job-specific competencies leading to permanent employment. Because of diminished public resources, tryout employment provides a good opportunity for local decision makers to build coalitions with other organizations having job training resources to support the achievement of expected outcomes. Particularly with respect to educational agencies, youth-serving organizations, and social services agencies, local decision makers need to ask:

- What local activities and services are provided?
- What existing resources are associated with the performance of each activity or service?
- What are the eligibility criteria for each activity or service? Do our tryout participants appear to be eligible?
- Where within the SDA are the activities or services provided?
- What are the performance measures associated with each activity or service? Given these measures, what is the pattern of past performance?

With answers to these questions, local decision makers can begin to develop non-financial and financial agreements with organizations and agencies that provide

the critical, non-duplicative services necessary for youth to maintain their participation in the program successfully.

How will employers be involved in tryout employment?

JTPA was written in such a way as to help ensure the private sector a strong say in how public monies are spent for training workers. Tryout employment, like JTPA in general, reflects private sector decisions on cost-effective ways of providing funds to train youth for future employment.

We know from past experience that private sector support is a critical ingredient to program success. Employer involvement and support in the design and operation of tryout employment can come in many forms, some of which are suggested in Exhibit 1. A number of local program officials indicate that researching and analyzing employer needs and securing their commitment to be involved with the program are the most important tasks for successful program implementation.

Successful tryout program marketing efforts result in increased employer involvement. Local areas use a variety of marketing approaches to secure initial employer involvement in tryout programs. To date, these approaches have focused on gaining an employer's agreement to serve as a worksite. For example, to aim its research and marketing at interested employers, one urban area distributes a tryout marketing brochure containing a postpaid interest-solicitation card which employers can mail back to the PIC. Research and subsequent commitments are sought only from employers who expressed interest. In PY 1984, 200 employers, or about 40 percent mailed in brochures which eventually resulted in 75 tryout positions. One rural, nine-county area relies heavily on the commitment of small employers to the tryout program; services to participants and employers are tailored by using only individual placements. One service provider in a highly urban SDA employs telephone marketers who canvass employers to advertise the

availability of the program and ascertain their interest in obtaining more information. Staff provide such information and subsequently conduct onsite visits with interested employers.

Several SDAs report the following questions about tryout programs are common among potential worksite employers:

- What are my obligations to the youth?
- How much will these youth be paid and for how long?
- What about insurance?
- Am I responsible for any paperwork or recordkeeping? If so, what?
- How old are the youth you will send me?
- What kind of youth will I get?
- Do I have to take anyone you send?
- Do I keep someone for the entire length of training?
- Can I pre-identify youth?
- What will this really cost me?

PIC members can be and have been invaluable resources in seeking and securing commitments from employers by:

- Writing letters of introduction.
- Securing appointments for staff.
- Accompanying staff on interviews.
- Publicizing the program's efforts.
- Involving highly visible business organizations.

- Sponsoring open houses for business

Remember, as you confirm an employer's needs, you gain a "foot in the door." Some employers may be quite willing to offer further assistance to a tryout employment program that is likely to benefit them and over which they have some control.

SECTION III: TRYOUT EMPLOYMENT APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES

In designing or refining any tryout program, thinking about the flow of youth through the program is a useful starting point. Use the following questions to determine your current participant flow or to plan future participant flow:

- What is the first point of contact that any youth has with the service delivery system?
- What is the first step or activity in the system (e.g., referral from an educational or social service agency, completion of an application, or an overview presentation of JTPA and its services, including tryout)?
- What is the next step or activity? And the next?
- Is there more than one path along which a youth participant can move? If so, what are the alternatives?
- What are the exit points in the system (e.g., securing permanent employment, attaining youth competencies)?
- What decisions are made to determine which path a participant will follow? What criteria are used to make these decisions? What are the criteria for assignment to each activity (e.g., tryout or within tryout, GED preparation, remediation, work preparation, onsite training, job search, or job placement)?

You may find it useful to think of three activity stages in the design of tryout employment programs as you raise and answer these questions:

- Stage one: Recruitment, intake, eligibility determination
- Stage two: Assessment and assignment to tryout or other activities

- Stage three: Training, job development, job placement

After you complete a description of participant flow in each stage, you can connect the stages together for a complete display. These three activity stages are useful in describing the general approaches and techniques developed by local officials for tryout programs.

Stage One: Recruitment, Intake, Eligibility Determination

Stage One encompasses all those initial activities to get youth into the job training service delivery system. It involves outreach and recruitment, particularly for youth in service priority groups, briefing youth about the program, and determining each youth's interest in applying for program participation. For youth, it may be one of the most tedious activity stages, because it includes the completion of all application forms used to determine eligibility for job training services. Many areas refer ineligible youth to other organizations or agencies.

Targeting special groups of youth affects recruitment activities. For example, younger, in-school youth are relatively easy to access through schools themselves; but older, out-of-school youth are likely to be more difficult to locate and encourage to participate. The tryout programs mentioned in this guide are targeted primarily toward two groups: (1) rising juniors or graduating seniors and (2) school dropouts. A number of programs stress that youth should be seeking immediate employment, i.e., "be ready to enter the labor market as a permanent employee." A few programs focus more closely on older out-of-school or dropout youth ages 18 through 21. In **Montana**, tryout participants are recruited from existing pre-employment-trained participants who don't plan on seeking post-secondary education and who are also ready to be permanent employees. In **Montgomery, Alabama**, four groups are targeted for tryout: public assistance recipients, school dropouts, in-school youth, and youth needing shorter-term

(summer) service interventions. Four tryout programs are offered, one to meet the needs of each of these groups. Less frequently mentioned as target youth for tryout are potential dropouts, youth enrolled in continuing education or General Equivalency Diploma centers, handicapped youth, and youth who have limited English-speaking capacity."

Because the most frequently mentioned target groups relate to school status, it isn't surprising that the most frequently cited recruitment or referral source are educational institutions or agencies. Youth-serving agencies are often used also. Other recruitment or referral sources mentioned are community organizations, the legal system, and municipal offices. The **Chicago Alliance of Business, Employment and Training, Inc.**, covering both Chicago and Suburban Cook County SDAs, indicates that youth who are current or former tryout participants are the greatest referral source the program has. CABET has a fairly unique approach to recruitment in the suburbs which have a low number of JTPA-eligible youth; it offers current participants a finder's fee of $50 for recruiting youth into the program. One-half of the fee is paid for referring eligible youth who complete pre-employment skills training and who are then accepted by an employer for a tryout position. The other half is paid after the referred youth successfully completes the program. This recruitment approach in directly establishes a peer support mechanism between referred youth and their friends who want to protect their "investments."

Other approaches include door-to-door canvassing, a staff-intensive activity believed to be essential in outlying areas such as those in **Yuma, Arizona**, where nearly 80 percent of the participants are Hispanic, many from migrant worker families. Program staff responsible for summer tryout program recruitment canvassed outlying areas, describing the program and other services and leaving flyers for additional information.

Stage Two: Assessment and Assignment to Tryout Employment

Stage Two is critical to the attainment of program and participant outcomes. It involves assessing each individual youth's interests, skills, aptitudes, and personal circumstances and, based on established tryout selection criteria, determining whether each youth can benefit from Tryout Employment. Each interested youth, is matched with an appropriate position and assigned to activities. Each youth participates in the preparation of his or her Employability Development Plan (EDP), which formalizes the assignment of services and arrangement of support services as appropriate.

Two important products result from Stage Two: the EDP and the individual employer or worksite agreement. The EDP documents assessment results, a training plan with explicit outcomes based on those results, and progress made in achieving stated outcomes. The worksite agreement outlines both the employer's and tryout program's responsiblities and describes the tryout position and training plan. The training plan should be consistent with the contents of the EDP. Exhibits 2 and 3 on the following pages display respectively the elements commonly found in the EDP and the worksite agreement. The documents provide guidance for tracking and documenting performance and monitoring program performance.

EXHIBIT 2: SAMPLE ELEMENTS OF AN EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

I. Identifying Information:

- Name, address, telephone number
- Social Security number
- Date of birth
- Family status
- Dependents

II. Work History

- Most recent work experiences, including job, tasks performed, and reason for leaving
- Volunteer work

III. Initial Assessment Summary

- Interests
- Educational proficiency
- Occupational proficiency, including work attitudes and behaviors, specific job skills, aptitudes and physical capacity

IV. Training Plan

- Vocational goal (long - and short-term)
- Services needed to accomplish goals, including individual services — e.g., Education and occupational training, anticipated outcomes, sequencing of services, responsible service provider
- Anticipated completion or placement date
- Supportive service arrangements

V. Progress Review Information

- Date
- Outcomes attained
- Recommendations/next steps
- Date of next progress review

VI. Training Plan Changes

- Date
- Item to be changed and explanation
- Initials or signatures (may include Counselor/assessment specialist, Participant, tryout supervisor, or instructor)

VII. Signatures (should include assessment specialist/counselor and tryout participant)

EXHIBIT 3: SAMPLE ELEMENTS OF A WORKSITE AGREEMENT

I. Introduction

- Identification of employer and service provider
- Purpose of tryout
- Effective dates of tryout position(s)

II. Employer/Worksite Conditions and Responsibilities

A. Conditions

- Indemnification and hold service provider harmless
- Abide by applicable state or federal health standards
- In compliance with JTPA, Fair Labor Standards Act, Child Labor Provisions, state codes
- Compliance with JTPA maintenance of effort
- Assurance that no participant will replace or take place of regular employee

B. Responsibilities

- Inform and brief supervisors about tryout participants.
- Provide adequate supervision, direction and assistance in reviewing tryout participant performance
- Provide orientation regarding safety rules, and rules of conduct and procedures all employees are expected to follow.
- Document and report time, attendance, and participant progress using service provider formats and following service provider schedule
- Report tryout participant injuries within X time period
- Notify service provider of any problems within X time period
- Make available to tryout participant the equipment, supplies, and materials necessary to carry out work assignments
- Permit onsite monitoring by service provider
- Make good faith effort to retain tryout participant as permanent employee

III. Service Provider Responsibilities

- Provide guidance and support to tryout participants and employer/supervisor
- Provide orientation to particpants regarding the tryout program and JTPA
- Make referrals to employer based upon youth needs, interests
- Maintain valid work permits on file as appropriate
- Advise employer of all reporting and documentation requirements and schedules, and furnish appropriate formats
- Pay compensation in lieu of wages
- Implement monitoring plan

IV. Termination

- Worker benefits (e.g., employment Insurance, workers' compensation), are placed in Section II. B or Section III according to stated policy.

V. Worksite Description and Training Plan

- Employer contact, address, and telephone number
- Normal services provided or goods produced
- Immediate supervisor of tryout participant and telephone number
- Tryout position job title
- Tryout position job description, including working conditions and major equipment used
- Tryout position work schedule
- Tryout position total hours of training
- Compensation in lieu of wages rate
- Skills to be learned, including list of work behaviors and attitudes and job specific skills, level of proficiency to be attained, and expected date of attainment.

VI. Signatures

- Service provider executive
- Employer executive
- Participant (optional for training plan portion)

Local programs follow regular assessment procedures and processes for assessing youth. SDAs with PIC-approved competency systems pre-test each youth to determine what skill deficiencies should be addressed during program participation and what skills he or she has at entry. Most SDAs' assessment procedures rely on a mix of diagnostic interviews and tests; a number appear to provide more extensive assessment to school dropouts and older youth. The tryout program staff for **West Central Wisconsin PIC** assign a number of youth to other entry employment sites in order to observe and evaluate work habits as part of an extended assessment. Staff report that these observations improve assessment results and eventual tryout assignments. They indicate that they want to expand this activity.

Selection criteria for determining who will benefit from tryout employment are, for the most part, similar to the "entrance criteria" suggested by the Act: (a) have completed pre-employment skills training; (b) have not had a recent regular part-time or summer job; and (c) are enrolled in school or a certified educational agency or willing to enroll. Some tryout programs accept youth who have not yet attained pre-employment competency contingent upon their acquisition of such skills prior to worksite assignment. The crucial criterion for selection in **Litchfield, Connecticut** is whether an employer is willing to sponsor a youth as an intern, an activity assignment planned to precede a tryout position. Each youth has the opportunity to convince the employer that he or she will be an effective trainee/worker; if a match does not occur, the youth receives counseling. The program staff also refer such youth elsewhere or tell them to reapply for the next program cycle.

In properly matching young people to employers and tryout positions, staff require sufficient information about employer expectations and the job itself (e.g., functions to be performed, working conditions, equipment to be used, minimum entry skills for training purposes). During the matching process, some programs

also use selection or screening criteria to review potential employer tryout positions. For example, the Skills Training and Education Program in **Montgomery, Alabama**, employs such employer screening criteria as:

- The area of interest and capability of the participant fit the requirements of the tryout position.
- The training that the participant will receive is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school.
- The position will benefit the trainee.
- The trainee will not displace any regular employees.
- The trainee will work under close supervision.

In **Montana**, the screening criteria focus on job conditions. For example, tryout positions are not allowed in the following situations:

- Jobs in which prior training is not a prerequisite for hiring.
- Jobs with a high turnover.
- Seasonal jobs.
- Jobs dependent upon tips or commission to equal the minimum wage.
- Jobs with substantial numbers of experienced workers who are presently unemployed.
- Jobs in businesses which have relocated within the previous three years and whose relocation resulted in unemployment of workers at the previous location.
- Jobs that will result in a competitive advantage to one employer over another if federal financial assistance for training were provided.

As youth enroll in the job training program, they may be assigned a case manager. This staff person, usually a counselor, will follow each assigned participant through the program to exit, ensuring that progress is made or that appropriate corrective action occurs, and seeing that each participant receives appropriate ongoing feedback. In other words, case management is intended to oversee participant flow so that no youth becomes "lost" in the system. Field representatives in **West Central Wisconsin PIC** are assigned by geographic areas, and serve as case managers for all participants residing within assigned areas.

Local programs vary in their approach to participant counseling and advocacy. The **West Central Wisconsin** field representatives who serve as case managers are also participant counselors. **North Carolina SDAs** emphasize increased responsibilities for participants and, as a result, encourage youth to be responsible for contacting the tryout program whenever they experience difficulty. Program staff intercede with employers only if absolutely necessary. **Montgomery, Alabama**, program staff suggest that maintaining control of all participants during their program participation is important; participants at worksites may be brought together each week in a class or conference for problem-solving, information exchange, and paperwork. In **Litchfield, Connecticut**, program staff visit most sites at least twice each week to observe program operations and confer with both participants and supervisors. Intensive on-site monitoring is viewed as a key factor to assuring program completion and placement.

Stage Three: Training, Job Development, and Job Placement

Stage Three involves the provision of training according to plan. Although most programs do not yet individualize services to participants (characterized by open-entry/open-exit, self-paced, and competency-based), services within activities are followed as closely as possible to each participant's needs. Counselors or instructors

continue to assess participants in Stage Three; they determine whether outcomes are achieved or whether corrective action needs to be taken. Worksite supervisors are closely involved in this ongoing assessment and documentation. Youth who are not retained as permanent employees can participate in job development or job placement services as necessary.

Tryout participants receive a mix of education and occupational training services. Educational services include regular high school programming, Adult Basic Education, remedial education, and GED preparation. However, clarifying exactly what each service encompasses is important. For example, remediation in **Montgomery, Alabama**, comprises three components; pre-employment skills training, which is mandatory for all potential tryout participants; basic education skills; and, life skills which are a distinct subpart of pre-employment. Successful completion of the pre-employment course is necessary for participation in tryout. Youth competency attainment can be claimed after the successful completion of any one of these three remediation components. In **North Carolina**, in-school students earn school credit for participation in pre-employment skills training; tryout employment is closely related to cooperative vocational education. **Litchfield, Connecticut**, participants who are ready to enter the labor force also take an introductory computer course to familiarize themselves with how computers work and to become proficient in entering and processing information.

Onsite work is organized in several different ways. **CABET**, Inc., states that, although most work agreements are for 200 to 250 hours, a significant number of worksite agreements are for 100 to 150 hours. CABET, Inc.'s view is that:

> employers are more concerned with the motivation of youth than the number of hours that they will be subsidized for...[Employers with agreements covering fewer hours] retained trainees at a much higher rate than those who insisted on the maximum number of hours available.

In the **Montgomery, Alabama**, tryout program for out-of-school youth, each youth has the flexibility to participate in several entry employment experiences within the 500 hour limit. Some of these experiences include: field trips to companies, resource material review, discussion groups, guest lectures by local employers, interviewing, job shadowing, and tryout. Tryout usually explores one or two occupational areas. It may be organized in several ways: (a) one-half day each of worksite training and classroom work; (b) three days of worksite training and two days of classroom per week; or (c) full-time worksite training. The approach selected depends on the need of the participant and employer support. To ensure close supervision, the **Tampa, Florida PIC** has limited to three the number of youth who can be assigned to any supervisor..

Worksites differ across tryout programs in terms of the skills taught and the level of compensation. Jobs range from minimum wage occupations such as materials handlers and food service occupations to semi-skilled general factory positions paying $7.00 per hour in compensation. Jobs include stock clerks, receptionists, heating and air conditioning mechanics, shipping and receiving clerks, furniture refinishers, typists, and auto mechanics. During the initial design stage for tryout programs, a few PIC, SDA, and service provider staff expressed concern about the quality of jobs that they would be able to find for tryout participants; these individuals now indicate that they are pleased with the results of their efforts. They place a great value on proper market research and subsequent marketing efforts to identify employers who want to train youth as employees and provide a service to their community.

Tryout employment participant outcomes are defined in many ways. However, they can be grouped into the following four areas:

1. Acquisition of specific job skills

2. Acquisition of specific work behaviors and attitudes, including attendance and punctuality

3. Satisfactory performance as reported by worksite supervisors

4. Acquisition of educational skills or increased performance as measured by grade levels

Usually tryout program participant outcomes are a combination of two or more of these categories. For example, participants in **North Carolina** in-school programs are to attain at least 85 percent of the training outcomes outlined in their training plans; these plans are developed by the job placement coordinator in concert with employers and participants. In addition, 85 percent of the biweekly employer evaluations must be positive during the course of their work assignments; employer evaluations reflect work behaviors and attitudes. They must also receive a satisfactory rating of competence in three areas: job search or labor market skills, job site performance, and attitude and learning performance. Case managers and employers in **Vermont** develop specific job skills that a participant can realistically attain during program participation. These skills are listed on a training outline format and supervisors sign off on those individual job skills that the participant has mastered. **CABET, Inc.**, states that for positive termination and employment competency, a participant should have time and attendance reports that reflect 96 percent of all scheduled participant time and should have satisfactorily completed pre-employment training and a mock interview as determined by the instructor. In **Litchfield, Connecticut's** program for dropouts and potential school dropouts, "program goals" reflect the four categories of outcomes. The fact that this tryout

program is not competency-based may have contributed to the following detailed statement:

- To provide eligible youth applicants remediation in basic skills to enhance employability:

  --70 percent will increase 1.5 grade levels as measured by the Test Adult Basic Education.

  --50 percent will improve educational skills sufficiently to take the GED.

- To provide eligible youth appropriate counseling, job readiness training, and job search skill training:

  --50 percent will obtain unsubsidized employment, of which 80 percent are still employed after 60 days and 25 percent are retained in direct hire, on-the-job training, or apprenticeship.

The Title II-B summer tryout program may provide an abbreviated version of the Title II-A tryout program or an opportunity to experiment in serving youth with multiple needs. In **West Central Wisconsin**, the major difference from the year-round program is the length of the job. Participants work on-site for five weeks with an employer commitment for an additional five weeks. The intent, of course, is to lead to permanent part-time positions for youth returning to school in the fall, and to permanent full-time positions for those who are not returning to school. Approximately 20 percent of all summer positions in West Central Wisconsin are tryout. The **Vermillion County PIC, in Illinois**, sponsors a summer tryout program which calls for all youth to spend one week attending pre-employment skills training without compensation. This is followed by seven weeks of on-site work at the conclusion of which participants are expected to demonstrate satisfactory work

behaviors and attitudes.

Participant performance monitoring is generally well scheduled. All tryout programs have formats for supervisors to complete that include time and attendance; most also include space for supervisors to rate participant work behavior and attitude performance using a simple checklist, e.g., a five-point scale from "unacceptable" to "outstanding all of the time". In **Contra Costa County, California** employers work with program staff to identify the job skills that participants are to learn and subsequently assess youths' progress in skills acquisition using the same list of job skills. The job specific skills are incorporated into the PIC's competency system. Regular work behaviors and attitudes are evaluated similarly to the approach described above. In **West Central Wisconsin**, employer time and attendance reports which include work deportment evaluation are incorporated into the competency system's documentation. If time and attendance problems develop, school and PIC staff jointly discuss the corrective action which will be taken.

As in most job training programs, follow-up occurs for some specified period of time. Although follow-up focuses primarily on verification of permanent employment, several tryout programs also use it to support participants after formal participation and collect data for evaluation purposes. To a large extent, follow-up at the service-provider level to verify employment is directly related to whether final performance payment will be received.

In summary, tryout employment programs can provide a- risk youth with the means to acquire a combination of basic education, pre-employment, work maturity, and job-specific skills which will enable them to secure and keep jobs. Most of these youths have many employment-related problems which can only be addressed by a planned mix of services. Key factors in the success of tryout programs are: (a) the

commitment of private sector employers to participation; (b) an accurate assessment of individual youth needs and individual employer needs; (c) availability of specialized education programs and support services as needed to maintain youths' participation in the program; and, (d) knowledgeable, commited program staff. Within the broad parameters for tryout employment spelled out in the Act and federal regulations, tryout employment designs can be tailored to meet local needs and resources. It's principle outcome — unsubsidized employment — can serve as the centerpiece in building a local coalition of private and public resources to help at risk youth.

For additional information or technical assistance, please contact your nearest Regional Service Office of the National Alliance of Business listed at the end of this publication; or call Steven Pines, Manager, Youth Program, NAB, Washington, D.C., (202) 289-2916.

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